



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 8

999 18TH STREET - SUITE 500

DENVER, CO 80202-2466

<http://www.epa.gov/region08>

Ref: EPR SA

INITIAL POLLUTION REPORT

Western Minerals Denver Site

Denver, Colorado

I. HEADING

Date: May 2, 2003
From: Dave Romero, Duc Nguyen, On-Scene Coordinator
Agency: EPA
Unit: Region VIII - Emergency Response Program
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Denver, Colorado 80202
David (303-312-6572), Duc (303-312-6509)
To: Kevin Mould, EPA Headquarters
POLREP No.: #2
Site: Western Minerals Denver Site

II. BACKGROUND

Site Number: 08DA
Party Conducting the Action: EPA
Response Authority: CERCLA
CERCLIS No: CO0010165136
NPL Status: No
Action Memorandum Status: NA

III. SITE INFORMATION

A. Incident Category

Removal Evaluation

B. Site Description

1. Site description

This is one of many facilities that received vermiculite from a mine in Libby, Montana. The mine in Libby produced about 80% of the world's supply of vermiculite at one time and shipped vermiculite ore to various locations throughout the United States. The Libby vermiculite is co-mingled with amphibole asbestos of the tremolite-actinolite-richterite-winchite solution series and, as a result, there is asbestos contamination at many of the facilities which received vermiculite ore from the Libby mine. Invoices obtained from W.R. Grace, who purchased the Libby mine in 1963, show that over 100,000 tons of vermiculite were shipped to the Western Minerals facility between 1967 and 1988.



The Western Minerals facility received vermiculite ore in rail cars and “exfoliated” it, which means it was expanded in a furnace. The exfoliated vermiculite was sold as an insulation product, also known as “Zonolite.” The property and buildings are currently owned by Archer, Daniels, Midland (ADM) formerly Minnesota Corn Products (MCP) a distributor of corn syrup.

2. Physical location

The Site is located at 111 S. Navajo Street in Denver, Colorado.

3. Removal Site Evaluation and Site Characteristics

The Site was initially evaluated by OSC Joyce Ackerman, but has been re-assigned to OSCs Duc Nguyen and Dave Romero due to workload considerations.

The former Western Minerals property is approximately 2 acres in size and has one large processing building, a smaller office building, and a rail spur. EPA conducted several sampling events at the site, and determined that exposed soil along the southern boundary of the property had visible vermiculite and waste material, known as stoner rock to some, containing up to 12 percent asbestos. Amphibole asbestos was also detected off-site, primarily along the rail spur and main railroad line. Concentrations of asbestos in soils decreased as the samples got farther away from the facility.

Most of the current facility is paved with asphalt or concrete. EPA and its contractors cored through the pavement in 3 locations and found vermiculite and amphibole asbestos beneath the pavement in percent levels. No visible vermiculite has been seen inside the processing building during EPA’s site visits, and former MCP representatives report that the building was extremely clean when they took ownership of it from W. R. Grace. Air monitoring inside the building did not show any detections of asbestos.

The surrounding properties are a mixture of uses, including a softball park, commercial and industrial buildings, and residential homes a few blocks away. No contamination was found in the softball park except for a few detections in the narrow grass strip in between the sidewalk and street. Some sections of the main railroad line are partially fenced; otherwise there are no access restrictions to any of the contaminated areas.

It is anticipated that a removal action will be conducted at this site.

3. Description of threat

Asbestos is of concern because chronic inhalation exposure to excessive levels of asbestos fibers suspended in air can result in lung diseases such as asbestosis, mesothelioma, and lung cancer. Subacute exposures as short as a few days have been shown to cause mesothelioma. Asbestos is a hazardous substance as defined by 40 CFR Section 302.4 of the NCP.

4. State and Local Role

EPA has kept State and local agencies apprised of the sampling events and results. Neither the State nor local agencies have the resources to conduct the needed site investigations or clean-ups independently.

C. Future Plans

The EPA is currently reviewing a work plan submitted by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) for cleanup along the railroad areas. For those areas not being addressed by BNSF the EPA is currently waiting on action from the State of Colorado concerning ARAR's and site access, concessions with PRP's, enforcement, and covenant issues.

D. Key Issues

None at this time.